

Obituary

The Baron C. G. M. de Worms

By J. L. MESSENGER *

The sudden death of Charles de Worms on the 10th October last at the age of 76 will come as a sad blow to his very large circle of friends both within and outside entomological circles.

He was the son of the Baron Anthony de Worms of Milton Park, Egham, Surrey where he spent much of his earlier life and where his lifelong interest in entomology had its beginnings. It was there that he began to build up his outstanding collections which, with his diaries, now pass under his Will to the Royal Scottish Museum, Edinburgh, whilst his Entomological Library is left to the British Entomological and Natural History Society.

The collection, which fills some 350 drawers, is very comprehensive as regards British macrolepidoptera and contains many good series of rare and possibly extinct species collected in the happier days of plenty with a number of good migrants and excellent aberrational forms. It is not possible within the space available to mention many of his interesting captures but perhaps the following should be recorded. On the 5th November 1955 he took a specimen of *Plusia acuta* Walker, which was the second British record of this inhabitant of Central Africa and in September 1959 he took the first recorded British example of *Eupithecia phoeniciata* Rambur, which came to light on the South Cornish coast.

He was educated at Eton (1915-21) where he was a Kings Scholar and at Kings College, Cambridge, where he got a Second in Agricultural Chemistry. He obtained his Doctorate at London in 1934. During the years of 1925 to 1938 he carried out research work at the School of Agriculture, Cambridge, at Kings College, London, at the Government Laboratory, London, at the Royal Cancer Hospital and in the Laboratory of F. W. Edwards, F.R.I.C., the Public Analyst for Westminster, Kensington and Hammersmith.

During most of the war years he filled the post of an Experimental Officer at Porton, Wiltshire, under the Ministry of Supply doing special work on war materials. Between 1934 and 1939 he published a number of papers in the Journal of the Chemical Society.

The wartime posting fortuitously enabled him to spend a little spare time studying the lepidoptera of the Wiltshire Downs near Salisbury, an area on which he became very knowledgeable and where some interesting material in the collection came from.

He joined the Royal Entomological Society in 1926 and the South London Entomological and Natural History Society in 1927, of which he became president in 1933. He was for half a century a regular attender of the meetings of both these societies.

* Stonehaven, Wormley Hill, Godalming, Surrey.

He was also a Fellow of the Linnean Society and a member of the British Ornithological Club at whose dinners and lectures he gave great pleasure by entertaining his ornithologically minded friends.

He was, in fact, a keen ornithologist who attended many Congresses in distant parts of the world. He was also a member of a number of local Natural History Societies.

After the war he was able to return to his first love — entomology — which he pursued wholeheartedly. He ran a M/V trap at his home near Woking, Surrey, but made frequent expeditions to other parts of the Country, accounts of which he regularly wrote up in the Entomological press. His interests, however, often took him to other parts of the world and in particular to Europe, from the Arctic to the Mediterranean and even as far as North Africa in addition to visits to Malaya, The Seychelles Islands, Canada and the West Indies. From all these places the collections were enriched. Whilst a good many of his captures made abroad were given to National Collections he retained his very considerable European collection which was strong in particular in the species of the difficult genus *Erebia*.

His publications in the Entomological press and elsewhere were very numerous and of considerable importance. In particular the following should be recorded:—

(1) *The Macrolepidoptera of Wiltshire* (1962). This well illustrated work is a valuable addition to the County records, containing notes of every species found in the county with much information on locality and distribution.

(2) *The Moths of London and its Surroundings*, published in "The London Naturalist" from 1953 with a number of supplements which appeared over many years and included details from the Buckingham Palace Gardens records of 1963 onwards.

(3) A series of papers dealing with additions to the list of British macrolepidoptera commencing with an article in 1951 recording all known migrants which have appeared in the British Isles during the present century and their later status here.

In addition to the above Charles de Worms will be long remembered for his annual reviews and his regular notes and articles dealing with his many entomological expeditions which, were things otherwise, would no doubt have been followed by an account of his records obtained during his last short visit to the Channel Islands a few days before he died.

He was indeed a true friend who kept in touch with fellow entomologists throughout the world; he was ever ready to help other collectors and share his wealth of knowledge and experience with them, and above all he was a most delightful companion.

All readers of *The Record* will want to extended their sincere sympathy to his sister, his two nieces and the other members of his family.